

OPEN SPACE RESOURCES

Purpose

San Luis Obispo County supports the protection, restoration, and preservation of significant open space features, which are irreplaceable resources for enjoyment by current and future generations. This is necessary in order to enjoy scenic beauty and recreation, discourage premature and unnecessary conversion of open space to urban uses, maintain public health and safety, and maintain a vital economy.

The local Open Space Plan of the County is comprised of this COSE, together with the Agriculture Element and the Parks and Recreation Element, consistent with Government Code section 65560 et seq.

Introduction

Our county is fortunate to have abundant open space features, including majestic natural landmarks, outstanding scenic vistas, important wildlife habitats, lands with recreational opportunities, and other valuable open space resources.

Diverse open space resources are a defining characteristic of San Luis Obispo County. They provide a major attraction to visitors from around the world and make this county a special place to live. These resources include the unique 1,000,000-year-old landmark volcanic peaks known as The Morros, stretching from Morro Rock to Islay Hill in San Luis Obispo; significant coastal wetlands and rare coastal dune ecosystems; the oak woodlands of the Adelaida area; and the stark beauty and endangered wildlife of the Carrizo Plains. These places are unique and worthy of protection for their intrinsic value. In addition, recreation and

Open Space as defined by Government Code section 65560 et seq. includes a broad range of resources. The Government Code definition reads, in part:

Open Space is "...any parcel or area of land or water which is essentially unimproved and devoted to an open space use...as designated on a localopen space plan as any of the following:

...open space for the preservation of natural resources...

...The managed production of resource

....for outdoor recreation

...for public health and safety..."

(Government code 65560(B))

Agricultural lands and open space resources thereon are addressed in the Agriculture Element. Mineral resources are addressed in Chapter 6 – Mineral Resources.

See Appendix 7 for the full text of the Government Code definition of Open Space



tourism that are based on the local open space resources contribute substantially to the local economy. **Appendix 7** provides an overview of the county's open space resources.

Open Space as defined by Government Code section 65560 includes a broad range of resources. For purposes of this COSE open space lands are resources or features of the landscape with unique or sensitive habitat for plants and animals, recreational opportunities, distinctive scenic values, hazards that threaten public health and safety, archeological or historical sites and areas containing major mineral deposits.

Relationship to Other Elements, Plans, and Programs

This chapter provides direction for the protection of the critical and diverse open space resources in the unincorporated areas of the county. State planning law defines open space to include a wide range of resources, including open space for the protection of natural resources, the managed production of resources, including agricultural lands and areas containing major mineral deposits and the protection of public health and safety. For purposes of the County's Open Space Plan, agricultural lands and open space resources thereon are addressed in the Agriculture Element, and areas containing major mineral deposits are addressed in the Mineral Resources chapter (Chapter 6) of this COSE. In addition, the Parks and Recreation Element identifies open space areas and habitats called Natural Areas, for acquisition, preservation, and maintenance. Those areas are primarily for resource protection, with the secondary purpose to provide for passive recreation. Outdoor recreation is also addressed in the Parks and Recreation Element.

This chapter affects the resources described in other chapters of this Element, which in turn affect open space resources. For example, rural development can fragment habitat, reducing wildlife's ability to survive. Maintaining open space in biologically sensitive areas will help prevent loss of habitat. Similarly, soil resources and vegetation are threatened by development on steep slopes. Preserving open space on steeper slopes will avoid erosion and loss of soil, will protect water quality, and may help



protect scenic views. In short, protecting important biological, soils, visual, and cultural resources may at the same time help protect important open space resources.

HOW DO THE MAPS REFERENCED IN THIS ELEMENT RELATE TO THE MAPS IN THE LAND USE ELEMENT?

The land use maps referenced in this document do not zone property. As noted in the Agriculture Element, follow-up rezonings will need to be advertised for public hearings before changing any zoning on property. The California Coastal Commission will also have to hold public hearings and approve any zoning actions on properties located in the coastal zone. Wherever possible, this Element has been prepared to be consistent with the Land Use Element (LUE), and it is the LUE that applies zoning to individual properties.

Table OS-1 shows the relationship between the map categories referenced in this Element and the corresponding land use categories (zoning) in the LUE. In some cases, the land use designations in this Element include all lands in the corresponding LUE category. In other cases, the designations in this Element include only some lands in the corresponding LUE category, depending on the location and use of a particular site.

TABLE OS-1 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COSE DESIGNATIONS AND LUE CATEGORIES

LUE Category	Agriculture and Open Space Element Designation ¹				
	AG	Large-Lot Rural	Multi-Use Public ²	Small-Lot Rural ²	Urban Lands ³
Agriculture (AG)	X				X
Rural Lands (RL)		X			
Recreation (REC)		C	C		X
Residential Rural (RR)				X	
Rural Suburban (RS)				X	X
Residential Single Family (RSF)					X
Residential Multi-Family (RMF)					X
Office & Professional (O/P)					X



TABLE OS-1 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COSE DESIGNATIONS AND LUE CATEGORIES

LUE Category	Agriculture and Open Space Element Designation ¹				
	AG	Large-Lot Rural	Multi-Use Public ²	Small-Lot Rural ²	Urban Lands ³
Commercial Retail (CR)					X
Industrial (IND)					X
Public Facilities (PF)			C		X
Open Space (OS)		C	C		X

Notes:

- 1 These designation correspond to the LUE categories in this table where indicated with an "X" or "C." An "X" means that the designations in the Agriculture Element or this Element include all lands in the corresponding LUE category. A "C" means that the designations in the Agriculture Element or this Element may include the lands in the corresponding LUE category, depending on the location and use of the particular site.
- 2 Applies only within rural areas (outside of urban and village reserve lines).
- 3 Applies to areas within urban and village reserve lines as well as some areas planned for commercial, industrial, and other non-agricultural uses outside of urban and village reserve lines.
- 4 Land Use designations defined in the Land Use and Circulation Element.

Following is a description of the COSE designations and public ownership that are referenced in this plan and identified on **Figures OS-1 and OS-2.**

Land Use Designations

Agriculture. This designation includes many different croplands and grazing lands that are individually and collectively important to the local agricultural economy. In addition, all lands covered by Williamson Act agricultural preserve contracts are included in this map designation. A more detailed description of agricultural lands can be found in the Agriculture Element. The Element's Appendix C contains a more detailed explanation of the criteria used in mapping the Agriculture designation.

Large - Lot Rural. This designation is applied to privately owned properties that have limited agricultural potential and where rural residences are the primary use on 20 to 320 acre parcels. This designation generally corresponds to the Rural Lands category in the LUE, but may also include some areas in the Recreation land use category that are developed with privately operated recreational uses on large acreage.



There are several purposes for this designation, including: very low density rural development in areas of limited agricultural potential recognizing that such uses will be compatible with agricultural uses; protection of open space, watershed and wildlife habitat; maintenance of low population densities in rural areas; and maintaining a clear distinction between the urban/village areas and the surrounding rural areas.

Small - Lot Rural. This designation is characterized by residential uses but may also include scattered agricultural specialty uses, part-time agricultural activities, and ranchettes. The designation corresponds to the Residential Rural land use category in the LUE, and may include some areas in the Residential Suburban category where that category is already located outside or urban and village reserve lines.

The purpose of the Small-Lot Rural designation is to provide for low-density residential development and limited non-residential uses that maintain the rural and open landscape in areas where agricultural uses are not sustainable or are clearly secondary uses. The designation includes existing developed areas, rural subdivisions where development of residential uses is appropriate and intervening areas that should be consolidated for rural residential use.

Multi-Use Public Lands. Lands owned and administered by federal, state and local government agencies are included in this map designation, along with major land holdings owned by non-profit land conservation organizations. The Multi-Use Public Lands designation includes many properties that are included in the LUE categories of Recreation, Open Space and Public Facilities (refer to **Figure OS-3**). There is **no implied or explicit right of public access** to all lands under public ownership or ownership of various non-profit organizations.

Many of these lands are important for their forest, watershed, scenic and recreational resources. All together, these lands account for about 25 percent of the total county land area. In many instances, the mere fact that the public ownership is extensive in area results in such benefits as providing wildlife



habitat, important watershed, and a visual amenity that contributes to the overall rural character of the county.

Urban Lands. This designation includes all areas within the existing urban and village reserve lines shown in the LUE, as well as areas outside those lines that are already developed with or committed to future urban-types of development for commercial, industrial, recreational, residential, or other non-agricultural uses.



**Figure OS-1
COSE Designations**

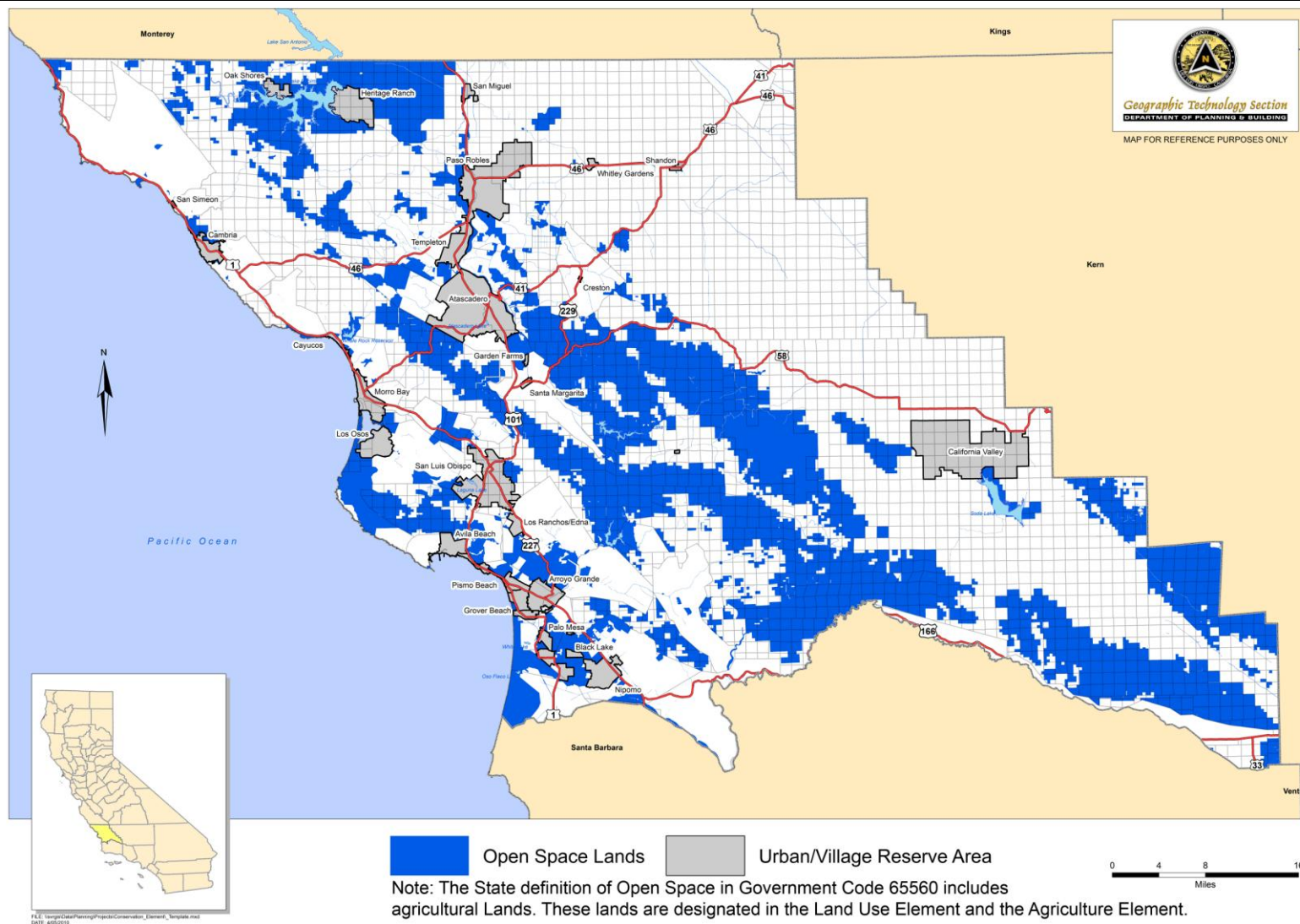


Figure OS-2
COSE Designations – Detailed Perspective



**Figure OS-3
Multi-Use Public Lands**

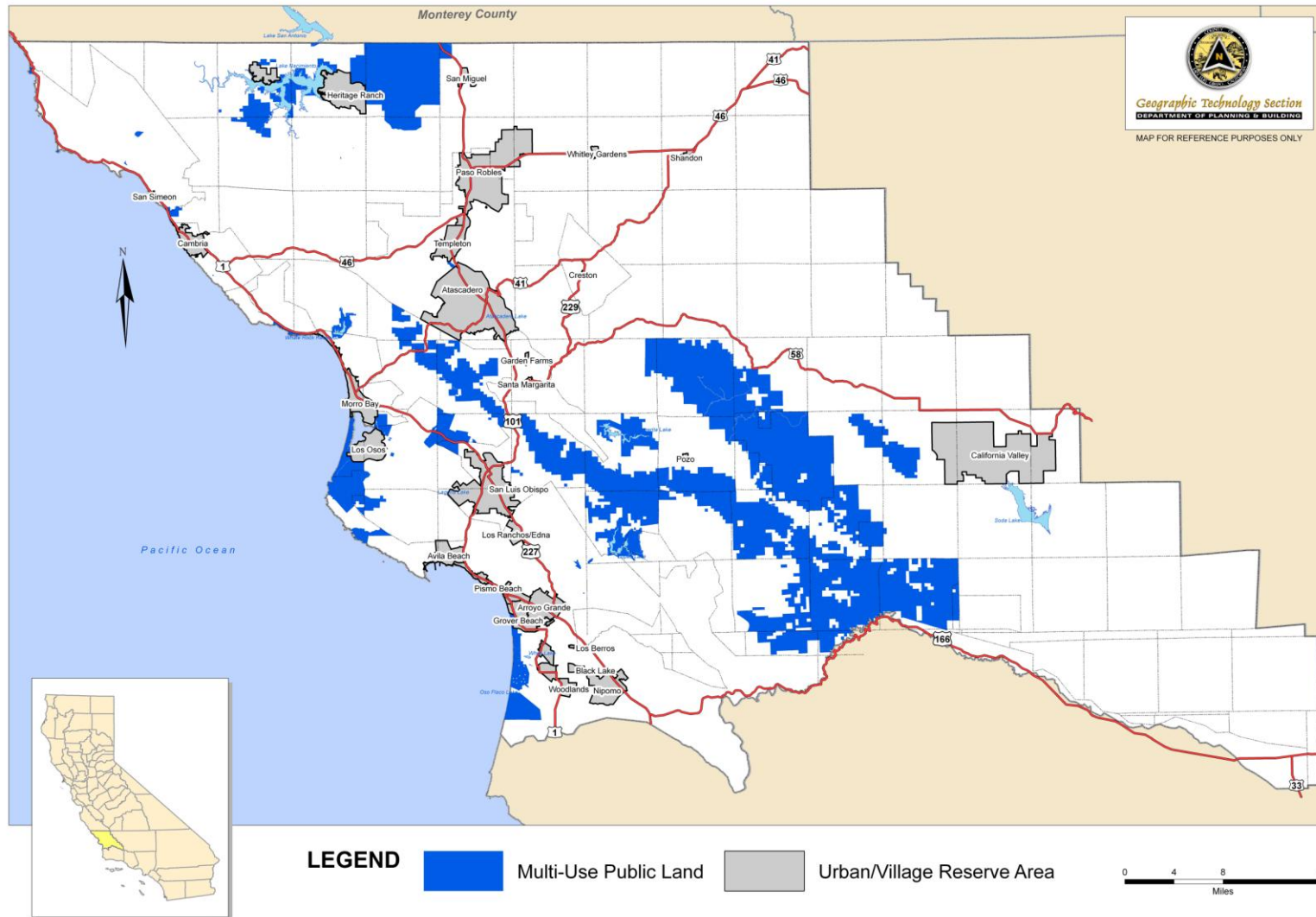
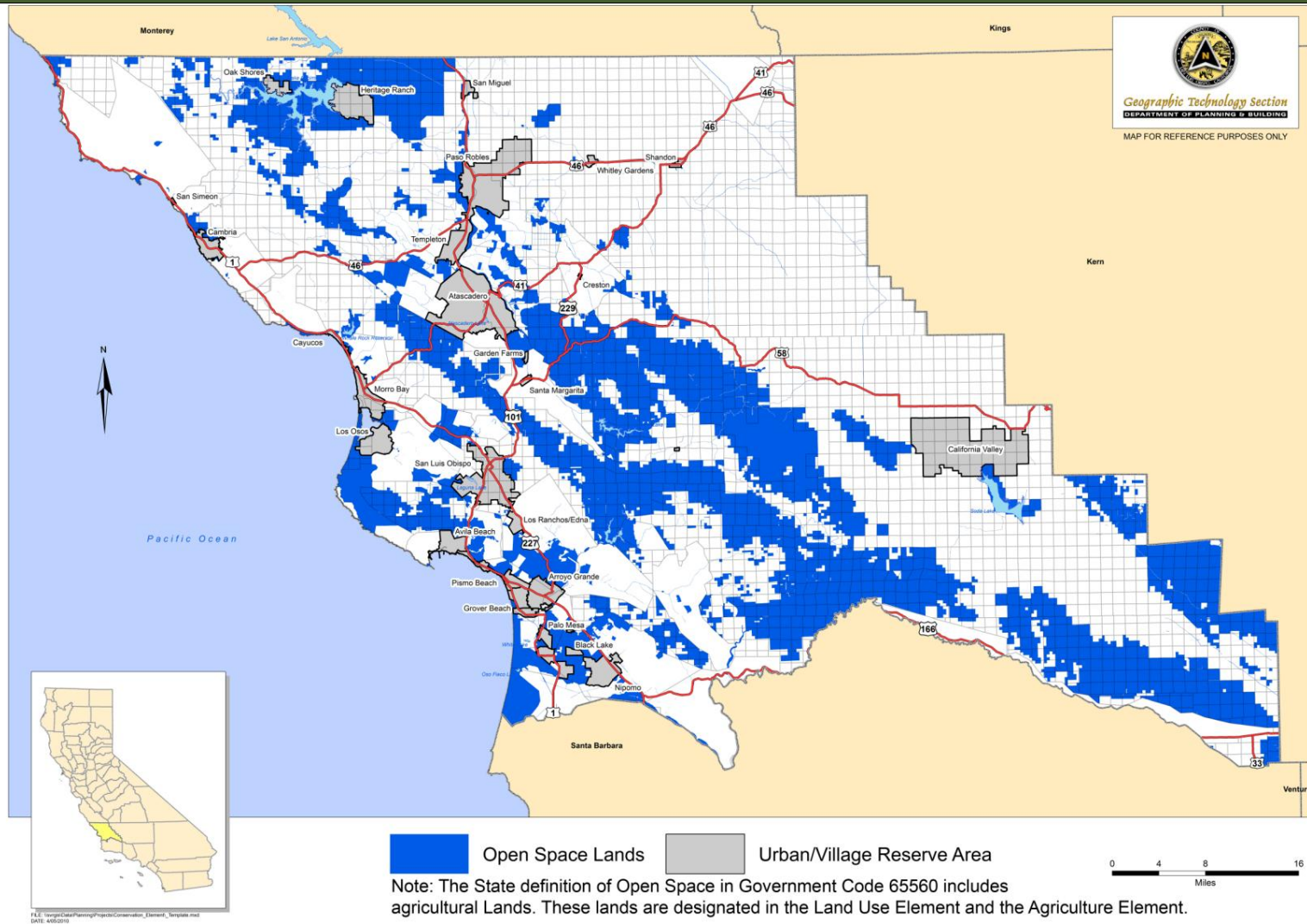


Figure OS-4
Conservation and Open Space Element – Open Space Lands



Major Issues

This chapter addresses issues of special importance to open space and other resources and strives to balance what, at times, may be competing interests. San Luis Obispo County contains distinct categories of open space, including:

- Open spaces which warrant special recognition for habitat values or otherwise protect public health, safety or general welfare; and
- Large bodies of water such as local lakes, estuaries and ocean environments.

At least two common issues impact these categories:

- 1) The steadily increasing numbers of people choosing to settle in the rural regions as opposed to the urban communities; and
- 2) Old land parcels recorded before the State adopted the Subdivision Map Act and/or before the County adopted ordinances governing land use planning.

For the most part, the parcels created by these so-called “antiquated subdivisions” remain in private ownership and are, in many instances, capable of development. Many of these old parcels are subdivided on land that might otherwise be better used for production agriculture or for non-agricultural open space purposes.

Continued residential growth in rural and agricultural areas such as the El Pomar-Estrella Planning Area, especially on smaller parcels, increases the likelihood of land use conflicts with agricultural operations, competition over declining levels of groundwater, and diminished rural character. Since 2000, over 600 parcels have been developed with homes in rural, non-conforming subdivisions--an increase of over one-third. Several of those nonconforming subdivisions are largely developed or “built out.” To give further perspective on the pace of growth, in 1977, about 80 percent of those subdivisions were farmed or grazed,



We will recognize success when...

- *The most important open space resources have been prioritized for acquisition from willing owners, are being acquired through a variety of means and are being managed*
- *There is increased public access to public open space lands, consistent with protection of natural resources and private property.*
- *There is an increase in the acreage of open space resources being restored on public lands.*
 - *Well defined boundaries between urban and rural areas are maintained by creating community separators, preventing inappropriate breakdown of rural parcels and revising regulations accordingly.*

and only a small fraction of over 3,500 potentially legal parcels were developed with homes.

As urban areas approach buildout due to resource and infrastructure constraints, the fact that it is easier and sometimes less costly to develop in rural areas will likely increase development pressure in rural and agricultural areas

The following issues are also addressed by the open space goals, policies, and implementation strategies in this chapter:

- Population growth creates pressure to convert lands containing open space resources to non-open space uses.
- Increased population in the rural areas increases the likelihood of conflicts between people and natural systems.
- Rural development fragments habitat.
- Land use decisions often treat conservation and economics as two mutually exclusive considerations
- Although the county contains an abundance of open space, it is not evenly distributed, or it may not be easily accessible where multiple uses could be made of the resource.

Goals, Policies, and Implementation Strategies

It is the intent of the following goals, policies and implementation strategies to preserve, protect, and restore irreplaceable open space resources for current and future generations, resulting in scenic, recreational, health, safety, economic, and other benefits.

This will be achieved by:

- Identifying open space lands that contain important resources that have unique characteristics and features, and clearly defining how the protection of those resources can be balanced with the needs of agriculture when the resources are located on or adjacent to agricultural lands;



- Developing effective management policies for the protection and enhancement of public lands that contain open space resources;
- Establishing land use policies that effectively define the boundaries between developed communities and the surrounding rural countryside; and
- Encouraging ongoing public awareness of, and participation in, the development of policies for the conservation of open space resources.
- Having open space resources does not imply or condone public access onto those lands unless that access is voluntarily given by the landowner. Many of the open space resources are located on privately owned lands. Protection of the resources on those lands is encouraged to occur through voluntary actions by the landowner.

Because open space resources do not follow man-made boundaries, they occur on both public and private lands. Therefore, the following goals and policies in this chapter refer to the treatment of open space resources on public lands and on private non-agricultural lands.

The Implementation Strategies in this COSE, the Agriculture Element and the Parks and Recreation Element constitute the “Action Plan” described in Government Code section 65564.

TABLE OS-2 GOALS FOR OPEN SPACE RESOURCES

Goal OS 1	Important open space areas will be identified, protected, sustained, and where necessary, restored and reclaimed.
Goal OS 2	Open space resources will be protected and sustained on public lands.
Goal OS 3	Ongoing public education programs about conservation, protection, and stewardship of open space resources will be encouraged. (OSG 4)
Goal OS 4	Urban sprawl and inappropriate development of rural areas will be prevented.





The San Luis Obispo Parks, Open Space and Trails Foundation was created in 1991 to provide special assistance to landowners and to receive gifts.

GOAL**1**

IMPORTANT OPEN SPACE AREAS WILL BE IDENTIFIED, PROTECTED, SUSTAINED, AND WHERE NECESSARY, RESTORED AND RECLAIMED.

Policy OS 1.1 Future Open Space Protection

Continue to identify and protect open space resources with the following characteristics:

- Recreation areas
- Ecosystems and environmentally sensitive resources such as natural area preserves, streams and riparian vegetation, unique, sensitive habitat, natural communities; significant marine resources
- Archaeological, cultural, and historical resources
- Scenic areas
- Hazard areas
- Rural character

◇ ***Implementation Strategy OS 1.1.1 Use of up-to-date science***

Incorporate up-to-date scientific information and techniques into programs to identify, protect, and manage open space resources.

Policy OS 1.2 Consolidation of Public and Private Lands

Encourage consolidation of publicly and privately owned lands into larger, more viable units in order to reduce "checkerboard" ownership, establish or expand recreation areas, protect other open space resources, facilitate better land management, or reduce trespass problems.

◇ ***Implementation Strategy OS 1.2.1 Isolated public parcels***

Encourage the sale or trade of isolated publicly owned parcels that are contiguous to privately owned lands if the sale or trade leads to better protection of open space resources.



◇ **Implementation Strategy OS 1.2.2 Voluntary lot mergers**

Use voluntary merger or lot line adjustment processes so there is no increase in the number of privately owned parcels near publicly owned open space lands.

Policy OS 1.3 Supporting other agencies

Encourage and support efforts by state and federal agencies, cities, special districts, and nonprofit and conservation organizations to protect lands containing open space resources.

Policy OS 1.4 Retention of public lands for open space

Retain land in public ownership that has potential for recreation, wildlife habitat and management, conservation of ecosystems, water conservation, or scenic, historic, or other important open space purposes.

◇ **Implementation Strategy OS 1.4.1 Retention of public lands**

Do not remove land from the public domain without careful study to determine its value to any government agency or the public.

◇ **Implementation Strategy OS 1.4.2 Acquisition and disposal of other public lands**

Review and comment on new plans and policies such as those involving acquisitions and disposal of land proposed by federal, state, and local agencies and private conservation organizations. Refer major or controversial proposals to the Board of Supervisors.

◇ **Implementation Strategy OS 1.4.3 Disposal of public lands**

Work with local, state, and federal agencies and conservation organizations to identify lands that are suitable for disposal and exchange. An inventory of these lands should be prepared for review by the Board of Supervisors to determine the appropriate course of action. The County should consider placing permanent agricultural or conservation easements on public lands prior to sale or transfer to public or private ownership.



◇ ***Implementation Strategy OS 1.4.4 Land Use Element amendments for rural lands***

Prepare proposed amendments to the purpose and character statements for the Open Space land use category in Framework for Planning of the Land Use Element to include all rural lands designated Multi-Use Public Lands that are not used or planned for active recreation or other intensive public uses.

◇ ***Implementation Strategy OS 1.4.5 Land Use Element amendments for open space***

Prepare proposed amendments to the Land Use Element to change the land use category to Open Space where major land holdings are owned by conservation organizations for protecting open space resources.

Policy OS 1.5 Retention of BLM lands

Support retention of Bureau of Land Management land in public ownership where it adjoins the National Forest, unless subject to other policies in this Element or in the Agriculture Element.

◇ ***Implementation Strategy OS 1.5.1 Land Use Element amendments for BLM lands***

Prepare proposed amendments to the Land Use Element to change the land use category of Bureau of Land Management land from Rural Lands to Open Space where the properties are expected to stay in long-term public ownership based on the inventory of Bureau of Land Management properties described in AGP 19 in the Agriculture Element.

Policy OS 1.6 Open Space Contracts

Consider the use of open space contracts under the terms of the County's Rules of Procedure to Implement the California Land Conservation Act of 1965 (the Williamson Act) to protect rural properties that contain identified recreational and open space resources.

◇ ***Implementation Strategy OS 1.6.1 Rules of Procedure amendments***

Propose amendments to the County's Rules of Procedure that clearly define the criteria to be used in evaluating the proposed use of Williamson Act contracts to protect and conserve open



space resources. Those criteria should ensure that such open space contracts would not have a negative impact on adjacent agricultural uses or on the existing countywide agricultural preserve program.

◇ ***Implementation Strategy OS 1.6.2 Incentive for open space contracts***

- a. As incentives to property owners to enter into contracts, implement a fee schedule for reviewing applications requesting an agricultural preserve for the protection of recreational or open space resources at the next annual review of the countywide fee schedule following adoption of this Element, and
- b. Process land use permit applications in a timely manner for development associated with recreational facilities on land subject to a Williamson Act contract

◇ ***Implementation Strategy OS 1.6.3 Permits for recreation on Williamson Act lands***

Provide timely processing of land use permit applications for development associated with recreational facilities on lands subject to a Williamson Act contract.

Policy OS 1.7 Open space resource protection

Protect open space resources by guiding development away from rural areas to more suitable areas.

◇ ***Implementation Strategy OS 1.7.1 TDC program***

Consider programs to better protect open space resources by guiding development away from rural areas to more suitable areas (e.g. land banking or TDC).

Policy OS 1.8 Land Divisions and Development

Encourage the use of cluster land divisions and cluster development that will locate residential clusters on the least environmentally sensitive portions of properties.

◇ ***Implementation Strategy OS 1.8.1 Ordinance amendments***

Amend the Land Use Ordinance, Coastal Zone Land Use Ordinance, Real Property Division Ordinance (Title 21 of the County Code), and Williamson Act Rules of Procedure as applicable in order to implement the following requirements.



Until the County adopts the ordinance amendments, implement the following requirements as though they are standards.

- 1) Where a landowner proposes a conventional land division, the proposed parcels shall maintain or enhance the long-term protection of open space resources.
- 2) The size and location of open space areas shall maximize protection of the open space resources. Where possible, located open space contiguous with existing areas of natural open space.
- 3) Where called for by the environmental document as an environmental mitigation, require ongoing management of open space parcels for sustaining the open space resources.

Policy OS 1.9 Acquisition Preferences

Support implementation of the acquisition strategies identified in and the Parks and Recreation Element. In all cases, acquisition shall be accomplished between willing buyers and sellers.

Policy OS 1.10 Interagency coordination for acquisition

Coordinate efforts to acquire open space lands with other public agencies and conservation organizations.

Policy OS 1.11 County Land Acquisition Consistent with Parks and Recreation Element

Consider acquiring lands from willing sellers based on the Parks and Recreation Element to protect open space resources. If the land involves active agricultural production, consider keeping the land in an agricultural use if such use is compatible with the purpose for which the land was acquired.

◇ ***Implementation Strategy OS 1.11.1 Habitat banking***

The County should establish habitat banking and enhancement programs to purchase land, development rights, or conservation easements to preserve and enhance important habitat areas and protect large, regionally significant areas of habitat or ecosystems.



Policy OS 1.12 Funding of Land Acquisition

Use a variety of means to fund acquisition of open space resources from willing sellers in accordance with the Parks and Recreation Element.

Policy OS 1.13 Tax Default Acquisition and Sale of Excess and Tax Delinquent Properties

Protect on-site or off-site open space resources as appropriate when properties are acquired through tax default or excess properties are disposed of.

◇ ***Implementation Strategy OS 1.13.1 Site surveys of tax default acquisition***

When the County acquires property through tax default, conduct a site-specific survey or analysis to determine whether open space resources exist on the property. If the survey identifies critical open space resources on the property, take one of the following actions:

- 1) Retain ownership;
- 2) Protect the open space resource through easements or other mechanisms and then offer for sale to a surrounding property owner or other interested party; or
- 3) Consider the trade of such properties if the trade can better protect open space resources elsewhere or can move potential development from rural to urban or suburban areas.

◇ ***Implementation Strategy OS 1.13.2 Disposal of tax delinquent properties***

Consider offering excess and tax delinquent properties to adjoining property owners for sale, lease, or management of the resource prior to a public disposition (Implementation Strategy OS 2.18.1), and work with the Assessor, Tax Collector, and Department of General Services to develop a program for consideration by the Board of Supervisors.

◇ ***Implementation Strategy OS 1.13.3 Park and open space fund***

Consider directing revenue from the sale of excess and tax delinquent properties that are without open space resources



into the Community Building Fund, or as an alternative, a special park, and open space purchase and improvement fund.

Policy OS 1.14 Land Exchange of County-owned properties

Exchange publicly owned land that is not needed for open space protection or other public uses for privately owned land with open space resources.

◇ ***Implementation Strategy OS 1.14.1 Inventory County-owned lands***

Prepare an inventory of County-owned lands and develop criteria for land exchanges for approval by the Board of Supervisors.

Policy OS 1.15 Land Use Designation for County lands

Land that is transferred or sold by the County should receive a land use designation that is compatible with surrounding uses, such as Agriculture or Large Lot Rural.

GOAL

2

OPEN SPACE RESOURCES WILL BE PROTECTED AND SUSTAINED ON PUBLIC LANDS.

Policy OS 2.1 Open space management to protect, sustain and restore

Manage open space resources on public lands to protect, sustain, and, where necessary, restore the resources. Encourage such management strategies on private lands.

Policy OS 2.2 Coordinate open space management

The County will coordinate efforts to manage open space lands with other public agencies and conservation organizations.

Policy OS 2.3 Best Management Practices on Public Lands

Utilize best management practices such as integrated pest management, invasive species control, erosion and water quality control, and holistic forestry management as natural resource



management tools, and consult with the Natural Resource Conservation Service, U.C. Cooperative Extension, and Resource Conservation Districts.

Policy OS 2.4 Disposal of biosolids on open space lands

The County should prohibit disposal of biosolids on open space lands as defined in the COSE glossary.

Policy OS 2.5 Grazing and agricultural uses on County lands

On County-maintained land, consider grazing and other agricultural uses as part of an overall best management strategy, but manage those uses so they will not degrade environmentally sensitive resources.

◇ ***Implementation Strategy OS 2.5.1 Site-Specific management plans for grazing on County lands***

The Department of General Services, in consultation with the County Agricultural Commissioner, Resource Conservation Districts and designated representatives from U.C. Cooperative Extension, Grazing Advisory Board, agricultural, environmental and conservation organizations, and representatives from Native American groups, should prepare site-specific management strategies for review and approval by the Board of Supervisors. The management strategies should be used in new or renewed leases and should include establishment of appropriate market-based lease rates.

Policy OS 2.6 Support federal and state lands for grazing

Encourage the federal and state government to lease public lands for grazing where it can be supported without degrading environmentally sensitive resources. Encourage public agencies to manage grazing as part of comprehensive resource management plans.

Policy OS 2.7 Coordination open space planning

Coordinate planning and actions with the various public agencies involved in open space protection and management, including the



cities and special districts in San Luis Obispo County, nonprofit and conservation organizations, and the neighboring counties.

Policy OS 2.8 Management of Natural Area Preserves

Manage Natural Area Preserves in order to accomplish the following, in accordance with the Parks and Recreation Element:

- a. Protect, restore, and enhance the natural resources of the site.
- b. Provide a recreation/education experience for visitors throughout the county.
- c. Provide an interpretive program that will increase public understanding and appreciation of the natural and cultural resources of the site.
- d. Provide public access that is compatible with the site's natural resources. Control or prohibit public access in areas where there are sensitive resources or where public access is incompatible with adjacent private lands.
- e. Manage Natural Area Preserves in a manner that is compatible with the site's resources, adjoining ecosystems, and adjacent agricultural uses.
- f. Permit only those uses that are of a non-consumptive nature and that are compatible with preservation of the natural resources associated with each site. (Also refer to **Policy AG 27** in the **Agricultural Element**.)

◇ ***Implementation Strategy OS 2.8.1 Natural Area Preserve Management Plans***

Carry out the preceding management policies through management plans that are designed specifically for each preserve. (Also refer to the **Parks and Recreation Element**.)

◇ ***Implementation Strategy OS 2.8.2 Prevent trespassing***

Take all reasonable precautions and necessary management measures to prevent trespass and damage to adjacent properties.

A Natural Area Preserve
is an area of land or water managed by County Parks, a similar public agency, or a private non-profit which remains in a predominantly natural or undeveloped state to provide resource protection and passive recreation for present and future generations. Examples include the following Natural Areas that are County-owned or managed: Upper El Chorro, Lopez Lake, Santa Margarita Lake, and Elfin Forest.



◇ **Implementation Strategy OS 2.8.3 Parks and Recreation Commission approval of management plans**

Prepare proposed management plans (operational plans) for review and approval by the County Parks and Recreation Commission prior to implementation.

Policy OS 2.9 Recreational use of publicly owned open space

Continue to establish and implement policies and management strategies to provide recreational use of open space. (Also refer to the Parks and Recreation Element and Policy AG 32 in the Agricultural Element.)

◇ **Implementation Strategy OS 2.9.1 Recreation on public lands**

Work closely with other agencies to plan and provide recreational use of publicly owned open space.

◇ **Implementation Strategy OS 2.9.2 Minimize recreation conflicts**

Manage park sites and recreation areas to protect scenic and environmentally sensitive resources, and to not conflict with agricultural or other rural land uses addressed in the Agriculture Element.

Policy OS 2.10 Off-Highway Vehicles

Work with County departments and applicable local, state, and federal agencies to provide workable solutions to off-highway vehicle (OHV) uses. (Also refer to **Policy AG 32** in the **Agricultural Element**.)

◇ **Implementation Strategy OS 2.10.1 OHV use on County lands**

Coordinate with other local, state, and federal agencies to encourage the prohibition of off-highway vehicles on public lands where the vehicles conflict with the adopted plans of those agencies or County plans and ordinances, conflict with uses of adjacent County-owned properties, result in damage to sensitive resources, or are causing trespassing and destruction on adjacent private lands.



A cyclist enjoys public lands.



GOAL

3

ONGOING PUBLIC EDUCATION PROGRAMS ABOUT CONSERVATION, PROTECTION, AND STEWARDSHIP OF OPEN SPACE RESOURCES WILL BE ENCOURAGED.

Policy OS 3.1 Ongoing education and outreach

Support and participate in ongoing educational and outreach programs regarding the value, significance, and role of open space resources.

◇ ***Implementation Strategy OS 3.1.1 Public education***

Support and provide, as appropriate, ongoing public education about the importance of the open space resources in the county.

◇ ***Implementation Strategy OS 3.1.2 Public participation***

Encourage public participation through the public hearing process in the ongoing development of plans, policies, and ordinances affecting open space lands through such organizations as the County Parks and Recreation Commission, the Agricultural Liaison Advisory Board, conservation organizations, and community advisory groups.

Policy OS 3.2 Conservation and Protection by Private Landowners

Encourage and provide voluntary incentives to private landowners to protect and maintain open space resources on their properties, for example, through use of conservation easements and voluntary programs managed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service and Resource Conservation Districts.

◇ ***Implementation Strategy OS 3.2.1 Provide Information***

Provide public information bulletins regarding the benefits of entering into open space contracts for the long-term protection of recreation and open space resources.



- ◇ **Implementation Strategy OS 3.2.2 Ecosystem education**
Educate private landowners about the importance of protecting and maintaining environmentally sensitive resources and productive ecosystems.

GOAL**4****URBAN SPRAWL AND INAPPROPRIATE
DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL AREAS WILL
BE PREVENTED.****Policy OS 4.1 Define urban areas to prevent sprawl**

Prevent urban sprawl by maintaining a well-defined boundary between urban/village boundaries and surrounding rural areas.

Policy OS 4.2 Maintain community separators

Maintain permanent separations between communities in order to retain the rural character of the county. (Also refer to the Community Separators section of Visual Resources Chapter.)

- ◇ **Implementation Strategy OS 4.2.1 Land Use Element Amendments: RL designations**

Prepare proposed amendments to the purpose and character statement for the Rural Lands land use category in the Framework for Planning of the Land Use Element to state that the Rural Lands category is also applied near urban and village areas in order to maintain a clear distinction between urban/village and rural areas and to provide maximum flexibility and options in planning for future orderly growth in urban areas. Prepare public review draft amendments by the end of 2010.

CONVERSION OF RURAL AREAS TO URBAN LANDS**Policy OS 4.3 Conversion of rural areas to Urban Lands**

Limit the conversion of unincorporated rural areas to Urban Lands in accordance with the considerations for urban and village expansion in Framework for Planning of the Land Use Element.



Policy OS 4.4 Annexation of urban development

Urban development will be annexed to an incorporated city or an existing community services district (CSD) or County service area (CSA), specifically in the following scenarios:

- a. Where cluster development from rural property is to be located adjacent to the urban area; or
- b. Where and when higher density development is to occur consistent with resource and service capabilities and orderly extension of urban services.

EXPANSION WITHIN URBAN AND VILLAGE AREAS***Policy OS 4.5 Maintain large parcels***

Within urban and village reserve lines, maintain large parcels, preferably at least 10 acres in size, until such time as full urban services can be provided.

**CONVERSION OF LANDS TO SMALL-LOT RURAL
(RESIDENTIAL RURAL AND RESIDENTIAL SUBURBAN
IN LUE)*****Policy OS 4.6 Conversion to small-lot rural parcels***

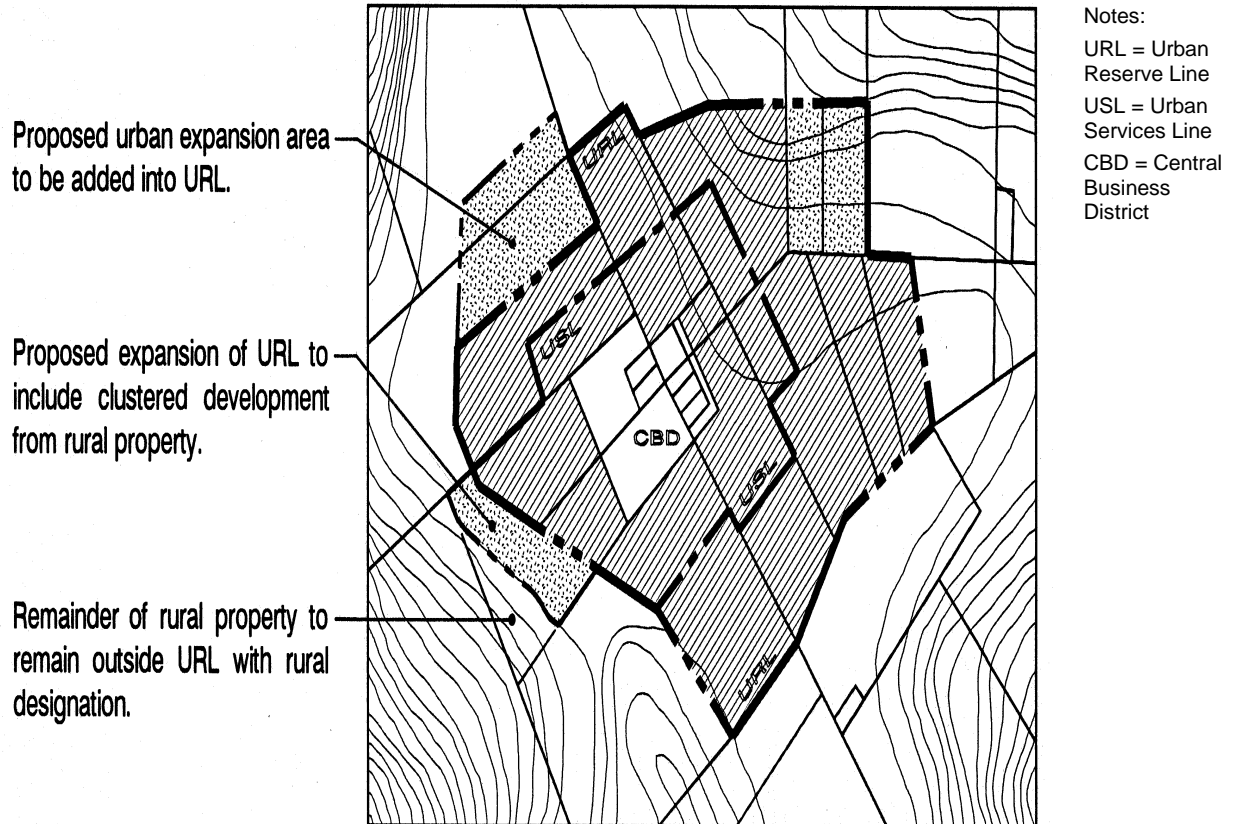
To maintain a well-defined urban boundary, avoid the creation or expansion of Small-Lot Rural designations (Residential Rural/Suburban LUE land use categories) in rural areas.

Policy OS 4.7 Cooperation with cities

The County shall cooperate with cities that have established “greenbelt” or similar programs, such as the City of San Luis Obispo’s greenbelt program and the City of Paso Robles’ “purple belt” program.



**FIGURE OS-5
URBAN VILLAGE AREA EXPANSIONS**



Summary of Implementation Strategies

For each implementation strategy described in this chapter, the following table (**Table OS-3**) summarizes the County department or other agency that has primary responsibility for carrying out that strategy. In addition, the table summarizes the priority, estimated year of initiation, and potential source of funding of each strategy. The actual timeframe for implementing the strategies is dependent upon the availability of adequate staff and funding.



TABLE OS-3
OPEN SPACE IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation Strategies	Responsible Department or Agency ¹	Priority	Timeframe to Start	Possible Funding Sources ²
IS OS 1.1.1 Use of up-to-date science	PB, GS	Medium	Immediately ³	DB
IS OS 1.2.1 Isolated public parcels	GS	Medium	Immediately ³	DB
IS OS 1.2.2 Voluntary lot mergers	PB	Medium	Immediately ³	N/A
IS OS 1.4.1 Retention of public lands	GS, PW, PB	Medium	Immediately ³	DB
IS OS 1.4.2 Acquisition and disposal of other public lands	PB, GS	Medium	2012	DB
IS OS 1.4.3 Disposal of public lands	PB, GS	Low	2013	DB
IS OS 1.4.4 Land Use Element amendments for rural lands	PB	Medium	2012	DB
IS OS 1.4.5 Land Use Element amendments for open space	PB	Medium	2012	DB
IS OS 1.5.1 Land Use Element amendments for BLM lands	PB	Medium	2012	DB
IS OS 1.6.1 Rules of Procedure amendments	PB, AG	Medium	2012	DB
IS OS 1.6.2 Incentive for open space contracts	PB, AG	Medium	2012	DB
IS OS 1.7.1 TDC amendments to LCP	PB	Medium	2013	DB
IS OS 1.8.1 Ordinance amendments	PB	Medium	Immediately	N/A
IS OS 1.11.1 Habitat banking	GS	Medium	2014	DB
IS OS 1.13.2 Disposal of tax delinquent properties	GS, AS, Tax	Medium	Immediately	N/A
IS OS 1.13.3 Park and open space fund	GS	Medium	2011	N/A
IS OS 1.14.1 Inventory County-owned lands	GS, PB	Medium	2011	DB
IS 2.4.1 Use of bio-solids on open space lands	EH, GS	Medium	2013	DB
IS OS 2.5.1 Site-Specific management plans for grazing on County lands	GS, AG, UCext	Medium	2013	DB, grant



**TABLE OS-3
OPEN SPACE IMPLEMENTATION**

Implementation Strategies	Responsible Department or Agency ¹	Priority	Timeframe to Start	Possible Funding Sources ²
IS OS 2.8.1 Natural Area Preserve Management Plans	GS	Medium	2013	DB
IS OS 2.8.2 Prevent trespassing	GS	Medium	Immediately ³	DB
IS OS 2.8.3 Parks and Recreation Commission approval of management plans	GS	Medium	2013	DB
IS OS 2.9.1 Recreation on public lands	GS	High	2010	DB
IS OS 2.9.2 Minimize recreation conflicts	GS	High	Immediately ³	DB
IS OS 2.10.1 OHV use on County lands	GS, PB, other agencies	Medium	2012	DB
IS OS 3.1.1 Public education	PB, GS	Medium	Immediately	DB
IS OS 3.1.2 Public participation	PB	High	Immediately	DB
IS OS 3.2.1 Provide Information	NRCS, RCDs	Medium	2013	DB
IS OS 3.2.2 Ecosystem education	PB	Medium	Immediately ³	DB
IS OS 4.2.1 Land Use Element Amendments: RL designations	PB	Essential	2010	DB

Notes:

1 Department abbreviations:

Admin = County Administrative Office
 AG = County Department of Agriculture
 AS = County Assessor
 APCD = SLO Air Pollution Control District
 Cities = Incorporated cities
 COG = San Luis Obispo Council of Governments
 CSDs = Community Service Districts
 EH = County Environmental Health Services Division
 GS = County General Services Agency
 NRCS = Natural Resources Conservation Service
 IT = County Information Technology Department
 OES = County Office of Emergency Services
 PB = County Department of Planning and Building
 PW = County Department of Public Works
 RCD = Resource Conservation Districts
 RTA = San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Agency
 Tax = County Tax Collector

2 Funding source abbreviations:

GF = General Fund
 DB = Planning and Building Department Budget
 COP = Certificates of Participation

3 Indicates an ongoing activity.

Source: Department of Planning and Building, 2009.

